



SIKHISM AND ITS POSTULATES

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God created universe from energy. According to scientists, before the creation of universe everything was compressed into an absolutely dense solid sphere. The evolution theory reveals that all the matter of the universe was in the form of 'primaeval atom'. This atom exploded sending material outward in all the directions known as 'Big Bang Theory'. Guru Nanak narrated in *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*:

ਆਪੇ ਸਚ ਕੀਆ ਕਰ ਜੋਤਿ॥

ਅੰਡਜ ਫੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਵਿਛੋਤਿ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ 839)

(Means the True Lord himself created an egg shaped sphere. He broke the egg from which everything has established with time).

In nature life is being created from eggs, placenta, perspiration and vegetative propagation. These four ways of creation of life have been mentioned in *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* by the Gurus.

Nature holds a magnificent diversity of colours, creatures and other treasure. Among all creatures man is considered as the highest creation on earth as he has faculty of thinking. This thought or the human mind is the peculiar blessing given to man. God sends great men into the world from time to time to show right path to the humanity. Such a great man was Guru Nanak who regarded himself as a humble servant of God as well as humanity. He toured different places of the world on foot for 24 years to remove contemporary ignorance, superstitions and evil practices. Guru also affirmed that his revelation came directly from God. The Divine word '*Shabad*' is his Guru.

In general all living beings are endowed with three inherent instincts i.e., self preservation, race preservation and a will to co-

ordinate and correlate with the rest of the creation and its creator. These instincts place in man the shape of "Desire" and the power of necessary corollary of consciousness. Desire can not be eliminated. "Desire to live" is the essence of life even though man knows that nothing lives forever. Again man thinks to live through generations, to perpetuate the race. The first two instincts produce in mind the desire of *Kam* (sex), *Karodh* (anger), *Lobh* (greed), *Moh* (affection) and *Ahankar* (pride) and the third instinct produces the highest thought to meet the God. The first two instincts although seem to give some satisfaction and happiness for some time yet lead to sufferings. The third instinct can be achieved through *Sat Sang* (the company of those whose mind is completely devoted to God and utter the name of God). The God is achieved through Guru. Thus, the third instinct provides healthy development of body and mind and leads to a feeling of real joy of living forever.

The words of Guru Nanak in *Guru Granth Sahib* explain that in case you have palaces of pearls set with jewels, with the most costly and pleasing perfumes every where, floors set with rubies and diamonds and beds decorated in the same lavish way, and a most charming and beautiful lady showering all her caresses and tenderness on you, you may have all the mental and occult powers of a *Sidh*, such as making your self visible or invisible at will, and command thereby a great respect from all. You may be a great emperor with mighty armies and mighty region, but in spite of all these your soul, your internal or real self will not be at peace without a contact with God. The real comfort, peace or joy can not be attained without uttering the Name (*Naam*) of God.

Gurus mission was to strengthen the human soul, to blend it with essence of divinity that is directing the minds towards truth, love, beauty and joy. In Sikhism, the goal is God-vision or merging into the Supreme Being. God is within the man. There is a need to realize Him and for that to do good deeds, avoid evil

thoughts, to serve humanity and attend the company of pious souls. A true Sikh should follow the teachings of Gurus. Plain living and high thinking is not only a motto in Sikhism but also a living reality.

Therefore, there is a dire need to spread the teachings of Sikh Gurus in the entire world. The life of Gurus and Sikhs is full of the teachings both in theory and in practice. In this booklet an effort has been made to narrate the main postulates of Sikhism which may be greatly helpful for the betterment of humanity.

GOD

God is the sole Supreme Being, who is generator, organizer and destroyer of everything. God is described both as *Nirgun* or absolute, and *Sargun* or personal. God made nature wherein he has his seat and is diffused every where and in all directions in the form of love. The whole world is a realm of God.

GURU

Guru is a *Sanskrit* word, meaning teacher, religious person or Saint or a perfect personality. Guru is all along operative commanding His whole being and shaping life to its Diviner issues. Guru provides light in human minds and removes darkness. Without Guru, there would be no cohesion or direction in the moral values of society, and in spite of a thousand kinds of knowledge there would still be utter darkness. It is the Guru who removes the barrier of caste, creed and colour. Guru has the power to unite human being with God. In Sikhism ten masters were Gurus to whom Divine guidance was imparted.

RELIGION

Religion is a spiritual path and is above the description given by philosophers and scientists. Human beings are social animals. People generally live in a society and one has to understand the proper and correct behaviour towards other members of society. Religion provides necessary guidance for the social and political

behaviour of the people. It helps to speak truth, to become honest, sincere and affectionate towards each other. Religious commands are considered to be holy orders. The real religious man has good deeds and believes in God. Religion offers solace in troubled times and gives strength to meet physical and spiritual challenges of life.

SIKH

The word Sikh means 'disciple' or 'learner'. A true Sikh is a pure hearted person who believes in one God and follows the teachings of his Guru. Sikhism is a universal world faith and religion for this new age. Guru Nanak was the founder of Sikhism. The origin of Sikhism lies in the Punjab. The 'Land of five waters' (*punj* – five; *ab* - water) which lies across northern India and present day Pakistan. Sikhism lays stress on the power of prayer and seeks good and welfare of entire humanity (*Sarbat Da Bhalla*) in its daily prayer.

BRIEF HISTORY OF SIKH GURUS (TEN MASTERS)

GURU NANAK (1469 -1539AD)

Guru Nanak was born in 1469 AD at Talwandi Sabo now called Nankana Sahib, near Lahore (Pakistan). Right from his childhood Guru created awareness about *Naam* of the Divine. He revolted against ritualism, caste prejudices, hypocrisy and idolatry. He awakened the people to a new consciousness and upbraded the rulers of his days, saying Kings are butchers and cruelty their knife. According to him, "it was only fools and idiots who ruled", without having the good of their people at heart. In fact, the Kings should be the dispensers of equity and justice. The Guru gave a message of hope to the people to shake off their cowardice. He regarded Hindus and Muslims as equals and referred to himself as neither Hindu nor Muslim but as a brother to all those who believe in God and truth. Being of a contemplative mind Nanak was the happiest in the company of Saints, both Hindus and Muslims. He developed positive dislike for false beliefs and all types of superstitious

practices. He wished to serve humanity as a devotee of God. He laid strong emphasis on the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. Worship and piety, he proclaimed had no meaning if they failed to promote truthful conduct and compassion for the less fortunate. He inculcated love and devotion, the repetition of God's *Naam* (Divine Substance) and the lesson that as men sow so shall they reap. To give the message of *Kirat Karni* he did farming. To carry his philosophy and mission he travelled to distant places along with Bhai Bala and Bhai Mardana. This mission completed in 24 years. Nanak's sweet songs, simplicity, sincerity and serenity won the hearts of the people. He pointed out that a true Muslim or Hindu was one who performed good actions. Guru laid emphasis on *Naam Gan* (singing the praise of God); *Dan* (charity for all); *Ishnan* (purification of the body by morning bath); *Sewa* (service of mankind); and *Simran* (constant repetition of the *Naam* and prayer to God for His grace). He carried out *Langar* (free mess) and formed a *Pangat* (eating in the community). Nanak did not favour meat, wine and hog. He broke the first sod and cleared the ground for building of a national character of the Sikhs.

GURU ANGAD (1504-1552AD)

Guru Angad was born at village Mate-Dee-Saran near Mukatsar in Punjab. He was known as Lehna. He worshipped the goddess Durga and the flame of Kangra in the earlier days of his life. He came to know the real path to find the Supreme Lord meeting Guru Nanak. His sincerity, service and love of the Guru inspired him to lead a life of great discipline and to become a perfect disciple of Nanak. Guru Nanak selected him as his successor and named Angad (a part of my body). The Guruship was given to Lehna on 7 September, 1539. Guru Angad focused his whole life after Guruship on strengthening Sikh institutions, education and propagating *Gurmukhi* (script of Punjabi language). Guru Angad extended education and training to masses. Guru Angad had a great love of

children and used to play and eat with them. He did not live on the earnings of the Sikhs. To meet his daily expenses Guru Ji twists coarse grass (*munj*) into strings used for making a cot. He prepared the first bibliography of Guru Nanak with the aid of his scribe, Bhai Paira Mokha. It is known as *Janam Sakhi of Paira Mokha*.

GURU AMAR DAS (1479-1574AD)

Guru Amar Das Ji was born on May 5, 1479 at village Basarke (Amritsar). At the age of 73, after doing 11 years service of Guru Angad Dev Ji, he got Guruship in 1552. Guru Ji laid emphasis on physical fitness and declared that human beings were created in the image of God. The human body is the temple of God. It is the duty of Sikhs to keep the body quite fit to the last. He denounced *Sati* (the custom in which widows were burnt alive on the funeral pyres of their husband) system, advocated widow re-marriage and discouraged *pardah* (complete cover of the body) prevailing in women folk. Guru Amar Das decreed that who came to meet him should first take a meal in the *Langar*. Even the emperor of the time, Akbar, sat and ate with commoners. He established 22 *manjis* (centres of Sikh *Sangat*). Guru Ji also organized missionary work and appointed *Sangatias* (Guru's representatives to address congregations by sitting on *manjis* or cots) to spread Sikhism. Guru Amar Das Ji was an embodiment of peace, conciliation and harmony and tried to eliminate caste distinctions among Sikhs.

GURU RAM DAS (1534-1581AD)

Guru Ram Das was born at Lahore on September 24, 1534. He was the son-in-law of Guru Amar Das. He was adept in poetry and music. He founded the city of Amritsar, dug the holy tank and conceived a shrine to be located at its centre, known as Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple). Hitherto the Guruship had been on a non-family basis. From Guru Ram Das Guruship became hereditary based on the principle of selection. Once Guru Nanak's elder son Siri Chand who founded the sect of *Udasis* came to see Guru Ram

Das. The Guru received him on the outskirts of Goindwal with offerings of sweets and rupees 500. Siri Chand remarked that you had grown a long beard. Guru replied, "Yes, I have grown a long beard that I may clean Thy feet therewith, and he actually proceeded to do so but Siri Chand held back and said, "O great King, Thou art is like a magic and I possess no such art and therefore could not become Guru".

GURU ARJAN DEV (1563-1606AD)

Guru Arjan, fifth in succession, was born at Goindwal on April 15, 1563. He was third son of Guru Ram Das. He was illustrious poet, practical philosopher, great organiser, eminent statesman and the first martyr to faith. He completely changed the external aspect of Sikh religion. He completed the holy tank and constructed *Harmandir Sahib* in the centre of the tank. Guru Ji called Sufi Muslim Faquir Mian Mir to lay down the foundation stone of *Harmandir*. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh emperor (1790-1840) completed the golden work of *Harmandir* around 1830. In those days, Punjab suffered from scarcity of rains. Therefore, Guru Ji constructed a number of tanks at various places. In 1581, he got Guruship. Guru Arjan upgraded *Sangtias* as *Masands* or nobles to collect offerings and *Daswandh* (one tenth of their income) from the Sikhs. *Masands* also preached about Sikhism, settled disputes and kept the Sikhs under a regular administrative system. Guru Arjan encouraged his followers to take to trade and commerce in addition to agriculture.

The most valuable achievement of Guru Arjan was the compilation of *Adi Granth*. He collected literature (hymns) created by Gurus, Muslim and Hindu Saints and low cast Saints and made a universal holy book and named it *Adi Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*. The *Adi Granth* formed an important land-mark in the history of the Sikhs. It served as a source of Divine, wisdom, felicity and bliss. The hymns establish a deep spiritual unity between human being

and God. The *Granth* also throws light on political, social, economical and cultural conditions of the times. Guru Arjan became the first martyr of Sikh History when emperor Jahangir ordered his execution. Guru Arjan Dev Ji was tortured for several days at Lahore. The king ordered to put hot sand on the body of Guru Ji, being seated on a red-hot cauldron and then put him in river Ravi. Throughout his sufferings Guru Ji remained unwavering in his faith. By this Guru Ji set the noblest example of courage and boldness in resisting the wrongs of the mightiest power on earth and thus sowed the seed which was to bear rich fruit in due course. He did not utter hymns regarding sacrifice but showed practically by giving his sacrifice.

GURU HARGOBIND (1595-1644AD)

Guru Hargobind, the son of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, was born at Wadali Village of Amritsar district on June 14, 1595. At the age of 11, Hargobind became Guru after the martyrdom of Guru Arjan. He proved himself a saint, sportsman and soldier, and was the first military hero of the people of Punjab in six hundred years since the conquest of Punjab by Muslims. At the time of the ceremony of succession to Guruship, the Guru wore two swords simultaneously. He declared that the two swords named *Meeri* and *Peeri* signifying *Shakti* (power) and *Bhagti* (spiritualism), *Teg* and *Deg*. Guru organized a small army, explaining that non-violence would encourage the enemy. He taught that it was necessary to take up the sword in order to protect the poor and the oppressed.

At that time it was only emperors who were allowed to sit on a raised platform, called *Takhat*, higher than two feet. Hargobind Sahib carried the torch lit by Guru Nanak and he added to it the luster of sword. In 1606, he constructed *Akal Takhat* or God's throne in front of *Harmandir Sahib*. The platform was 12 ft. high in princely attire. Guru Ji told the Sikhs that *Harmandir* was the seat of his spiritual authority and *Akal Takhat* the seat of his

temporal authority. There he administered justice like a king in court, accepted presents and awarded honours and punishments. Thus, the Guru created a Government of his own like that of Mughals. Through congressional prayers Guru Ji not only added to the religious fervour of the Sikhs, but also strengthened the spirit of unity and cooperation among them. Even today honours are awarded by the head of *Akal Takhat* to the Sikhs who show bravery, do good work and punishment to those who work against Sikh principles.

GURU HAR RAI (1630-1661AD)

Guru Hargobind's deceased eldest son Gurditta had two sons, Dhirmal and Har Rai. Har Rai was born at Kiratpur on January 30, 1630. At the age of 14, Har Rai got Guruship. He devoted all his energy to consolidate the Sikh religion. Guru Ji maintained a military posture but cautiously avoided conflict with emperor Aurangzeb and devoted all his efforts to help the poor and instructed Sikhs to concentrate on God. The Guru installed his younger son, Har Krishan, as the next Guru after banishing his elder son, Ram Rai. Ram Rai on the instructions of emperor Jahangir tried to modify hymns in the Holy *Granth*. When Guru Har Rai listened about the actions of his son he was deeply distressed. The Guru declared Ram Rai unfit for Guruship and said, "The Guruship is like a tiger's milk which can only be contained in golden cup. Only he who is ready to devote his life thereto is worthy of it".

GURU HAR KRISHAN (1656-1664AD)

Guru Har Krishan was born at Nahan on July 7, 1656. He was the younger son of Guru Har Rai. At the age of 5, Har Krishan Ji was installed as Guru. Aurangzeb summoned Guru Ji to Delhi to justify his claim to Guruship. He sent Mirza Raja Jai Singh to bring Guru Ji to Delhi. Har Krishan Ji was put up in the house of Mirza Raja Jai Singh where now-a-days Gurdwara Bangla Sahib is located. Guru Ji astonished the people and *Pandits* with his knowl-

edge and spiritual powers. At Delhi, Har Krishan Ji helped the people suffering from smallpox. Later on Guru Ji also had an attack of smallpox with high fever. Owing to infectious disease the Guru was shifted to a house in village Bhogal near the present Nizam-ud-din railway station. Guru's followers were anxious to secure nomination of a successor according to old tradition. The Guru uttered "*Baba Bakale*". Obviously he meant Teg Bahadur, his grand uncle, who was living at Bakala. Guru Ji passed away happily after forbidding anyone to mourn for him.

GURU TEG BAHADUR (1621-1675AD)

Guru Teg Bahadur was born at Amritsar on April 1, 1621. He was the youngest son of Guru Hargobind Sahib. Teg Bahadur became Guru at the age of 43. He was a man of quiet and retiring disposition, cherisher of the poor, helper of downtrodden and great gladiator (sword player). He dugged wells for providing drinking water, procured cows and distributed to the poor people for providing milk and purchased land for distribution to landless peasants. Guru Ji toured distant places to meet his disciples accompanied by a large cavalcade. In those days the Mughul tyrant Aurangzeb initiated his policy of conversion through bribery and force. This prompted Kashmiri *Pandits* (educated persons of Hindu religion) to appeal to Guru Teg Bahadur for help. Declaring that the only way to save Hindu religion from such tyranny was by sacrificing one's life. The Guru told *Pandits* to send a message to Aurangzeb that in case Guru Teg Bahadur embraced Islam they would also do so. Aurangzeb summoned the Guru to his court and told him either to convert to Islam or die.

Guru Ji during the talk with the emporor responded that every body is a creature of God. There is no Hindu and no Muslim. So he should not use force for conversion. On this reply Aurangzeb ordered to torture the Guru to change his mind. Before beheading the Guru, Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dila the disci-

ples of the Guru - were massacred in the most horrible way. The Guru Sahib was beheaded on November 11, 1675 at Delhi where at *Chandni Chowk*, *Gurdwara Sisganj* is situated. So Guru Ji sacrificed himself to save Hindu religion and for freedom of worship for all religions. The Guru showed the ultimate example of non-violence and revealed that death is better than living in slavery.

GURU GOBIND SINGH (1666-1708AD)

Guru Gobind Singh (son of Guru Teg Bahadur) was born at Patna (Bihar) on December 22, 1666. Guru Ji was so fascinating personality, so bewitching, so dynamic, so momentous, so unforgettable and so great warrior who brought wonderful changes in his short life. He was the greatest genius of his age. He was luminous like the sun, and had conquered death. He was born in conflict, brought up in conflict and died in conflict. However, the conflict endeavored to create a new nation, foundation of new society based upon justice and freedom of conscience. It designed to promulgate the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. The Guru says that when cruelty and repression can not be stopped in any other way or go beyond remedy, it is righteous to unsheath the sword. He unsheathed the sword not for making any Kingdom but to fight against injustice and for freedom of downtrodden and saintly souls. Guru Gobind Singh sacrificed his father, four sons aged 18, 14, 8 and 6 years, mother Gujri, several relatives and thousands of Singhs against tyranny and for the right to lead a noble life. The Guru founded *Khalsa* (pure and sincere person) in 1699 and baptized his followers. The word of *Khalsa* consists of three letters – *Kha* means *Yogi* (who always recites God's praise), *I* means *Bhogi* (to achieve happiness), *sa* means (spirituality or unity with God). The creation of *Khalsa* was an epoch making event in the religious and political history of the country. It removed the distinction of birth, caste, class and colour and governs distinctive identity to the Sikhs. Guru stated that all human beings

are equal in social status and had the same rights and privileges. Guru Ji was a poet of distinction, a patron of learning and magnetic personality. At Nanded (also called Hazur Sahib) in Maharashtra, on October 3, 1708, Guru Gobind Singh thought to abolish the physical office of the Guru. He opened the *Granth*, placed five paise and a coconut before it, bowed before it, then went around the holy scripture thrice, bowed again and declared it as the Guru for all times to come.

THREE GOLDEN RULES OF SIKHISM

All the Sikh Gurus worked for universal brotherhood and taught the mankind to attain liberation. In their sacred words they set three golden rules (*kirat karni*, *Naam Japna* and *Vand Chhakna*) for their followers :

i. **Kirt Karni** : It means work hard and earn through an honest and truthful living. True Sikh never cheats and always remains loyal to the Guru.

ii. **Naam Japna** : It means meditation on God's name. By meditation a person becomes truthful, humble and remains in high spirits. Through uttering the name of God the mind of the man becomes clean and gets in touch with infinite. The universe is intoxicated with the wine of *Maya* (material) but it has been saved with the ambrosial nectar of the *Naam* blessed by Guru. *Naam* removes our evils, it gives us the knowledge of truth and brings about a merger of the individual into the Supreme.

iii. **Vand Chhakna** : It means to share. Giving away something in the service of others or to share their earnings with the needy is a necessary part of a Sikh's life. According to the Gurus teachings every Sikh should contribute 1/10 (also called *daswand*) of his income for the welfare of the society.

FOUR PILLARS OF SIKHISM

Bani, Bana, Simran and *Seva* are the four pillars a Sikh should live by :

i. **Bani** : *Bani* means Gur *Shabad* or hymns uttered by Gurus or Saints. *Bani* is the light house for human sole. The fascinating hymns of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* chanted in deep reverences and devotion, inspire the minds of human beings. The guidance and message of the sacred Volume is a vast ocean of enlightenment for humans to learn the true meaning of life. Guru Gobind Singh ordered the Sikhs to recite five *Banis* (*Japji, Jap Sahib, Swias, Chopai* and *Anand Sahib* in the early morning), *Rehras* in the evening and *Kirtan Sohila* before going to sleep. Truth, contentment, peace and poise are obtained from the *Bani*.

ii. **Bana** : *Bana* means uniform of the Sikh. Guru gave a separate identity to Sikh. A Sikh can be recognized in case thousands of people are assembled at a place. Guru Gobind Singh provided five jewels to his Singhs that include *Kesh* covered with *dastar* (turban), *kara* (iron bangle), *Kirpan* (sword), *Kangha* (comb) and *Kachhera* (underwear).

Kesh or hair is a natural gift and signify purity. The uncut hair of the head and beard gives Sikhs a distinctive mark in society. Hair covered with turban are recognized and respected as a sign of integrity and trustworthiness. The turban is a crown granted by the Gurus.

Kara or iron bangle is put on right arm (on wrist) which reminds commitment of truth and faith. It is a sign of restraint and bondage.

Kangha or small wooden comb is always put in hair to keep them clean and tidy.

Kirpan or small sword is a weapon of self defence and should never be used as aggression. *Kirpan* is an emblem of power and courage. *Kirpan* is not a dagger, it is an article of faith.

Kachhera or short pant is for covering the private parts and is a sign of clean character.

iii. Simran : It means to remember God through *Gurbani*. *Simran* is the meditation that inspires a person to be hold Thy in heart. It provides new spirit, bolstars new faith, new life and new expectations. It helps to cure all the ills and sufferings of humanity. Due to the presence of light in mind one transcends all worldly woes and worries.

iv. Seva (Social service): It means acts of love and charity - serving the people particularly the poor. *Seva* includes sacrifice for humanity, truth and justice. True *Seva* is one that is done with clean intentions, without personal motives and profits. Who so ever does the true *Seva* he can get the God. *Seva* may be of cleaning utensils in community mess or provide water, food, shelter, clothes, etc.

FIVE UNIQUE PRINCIPLES OF SIKHISM

For the guidance of Sikhs, Guru prescribed unique principles. There are five symbols, five beliefs, five vows, five deliverances and five rules of conduct for Sikhs.

i. Five symbols (5-K) – *kesh*, *kara*, *kangha*, *kirpan* and *kachhera* are the part of Sikh uniform.

ii. Five beliefs – Guru instructed the Sikhs that when ever they meet they should utter *Wahe Guru Ji ka Khalsa* (five words) *Wahe Guru Ji ki Fateh* (five words) (*Khalsa* is thine o' Lord so does and the victory belongs to you).

iii. Five vows – *Khalsa* were required not to do five things:

- a) To shave or cut hair.
- b) To smoke or take any kind of drug.
- c) To eat *halal* (animal killed in muslim style).
- d) To have relation with persons working against the ideas of Guru.
- e) To worship tombs, graves and cherish superstitions.

iv. Five deliverances

- a) *Dharm Nash* or freedom from previous religious practices and customs.
- b) *Karam Nash* or obliteration of the past bad deeds.
- c) *Janam Nash* or giving up the caste effects.
- d) *Sharam Nash* or destruction of hereditary professional distinctions.
- e) *Bharam Nash* or discarding the rituals prescribed by old practices.

v. Five conducts

- a) Before beginning every work prayer should be offered before God.
- b) A Sikh should help one another and serve the *panth*.
- c) A Sikh should be a saint as well as a warrior.
- d) A Sikh should not covet others property.
- e) A Sikh should not approach another woman's couch by mistake or even in dream.

FIVE STAGES BEFORE THE MERGER IN THE INFINITE

- a) ***Dharam Khand*** - In this plane of law man learns righteous and moral conduct.
- b) ***Gian Khand*** - This is the plane of knowledge or reason. The knowledge of spiritual values make a man proceed on his spiritual journey.
- c) ***Saram Khand*** - It is a plane of spiritual effort. Spiritual effort never go unrewarded.
- d) ***Karam Khand*** - It is a plane of grace. Both grace and effort go together.
- e) ***Sach Khand*** - The stage of realm of truth. God lives in this region. A man through true worship can acquire abode in heaven.

GURU'S MAIN TEACHINGS

Sikhism was not meant for emphasizing a particular religious dogma or a method of salvation but was meant to be a vehicle for giving a practical way of life. Guru Nanak wanted to change the motivation of human beings from self-centredness (*manmukh*) to God-centredness (*gurmukh*). In the hymns of *Guru Granth Sahib Ji* the main emphasis is given on the following aspects :

THE PLACE OF THE GURU

The Guru is a saviour, the prophet and God-illuminated person through whom God reveals Himself. Guru Nanak revealed that neither divinity nor prophethood, but Guru is essential for the realization of God. It is only through Guru an individual can achieve communication with God. Nanak declared that his own Guru is God. Thus, Nanak wanted passionate devotion and complete surrender to the Guru as Guru acts as a guide to show the real path of life. Guru gives the clear concept of placing principles above personalities and delivers religious devotion to serve social, economical and political ends. The tenth Guru, Gobind Singh Ji abolished altogether the institution of a Guru in person and conferred Guruship on *Granth Sahib* forever. In *Guru Granth Sahib* emphasis is given to become God-oriented and not money-oriented.

SANGAT

Sangat means local religious congregations composed of Sikhs who were attracted to the Guru's ideals and mission and included people from all castes, inclusive of untouchables. In the *Sadh Sangat* mainly Guru's hymns are sung in which *Naam* pervades. These *Sangats* are usually held regularly in *Gurdwaras* (traditionally called *Dharamsalas*).

PANGAT

Pangat means partaking *Langar* (community dining) sitting in a row on carpet placed on ground without any distinction of caste,

creed, religion or social status as in the eyes of God there is no person high or low, superior or inferior, big or small, poor or rich. The *Langar* is served free of cost. It was the most vital and effective step for creating the spirit of equality, unity and fraternization among the human beings.

FATHERHOOD OF GOD AND BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

In Sikh faith a cardinal principle is characterized by spiritual fatherhood and spiritual brotherhood. It is a new type of grouping in the history of civilization, which has not always been recognized. Certain individuals or groups are attracted by the Sikh ideology, meet together in the *Sangats* and a sense of spiritual fellowship develops among them. This new spirit of unity leads to a definite new way of life and binds its members into a strongly knit spiritual community.

EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY

The spirit of equality was created by the Gurus in Sikh *Panth*. Equality is a potent revolutionary motive force. Guru Nanak Dev Ji bowed at the feet of Angad (*bhai Lehna*) when he appointed him as his successor Guru and the same principle was followed by the later Gurus. Gurus addressed all the Sikhs as brothers (*bhai*).

In continuation of this tradition Guru Gobind Singh Ji called the Sikhs, 'the beloved ones'. Even non-Sikh historians confirm the prevalence of this spirit of equality, brotherhood and fraternization among the Sikhs. A contemporary historian of Aurangzeb writes, "If a stranger knocks at a Sikh's door even at midnight and utters the name of Nanak he is welcomed, even if, he is a thief, robber or wretch, he is considered as friend and brother and is properly looked after". Thus, the degree of social equality and fraternization achieved by the Sikh movement is indeed remarkable.

ABOLITION OF CASTE SYSTEM

Caste system creates mutual repulsion and disunity, besides inequality and hierarchism. From social and political point of view, caste creates division, hatred, jealousy and distrust between neighbours. Guru Nanak took a revolutionary step for abolishing

the hatredness created by caste system by starting *Langar* i.e. (community dining), where all dined, sitting together, irrespective of any caste and creed. In addition, all persons took the same food. At the time of *Amrit* ceremony, started by Guru Gobind Singh, all drank *Amrit* from the same bowl. Even Guru Ji partook *Amrit* from the five beloved ones, of whom four were *Sudras* (low caste). Otherwise the caste system in Hindustan was causing such a pollution that if the member of a low caste merely looked at the meal of a *Brahmin* (high caste), it was defiled. For the *Brahmin* a stranger's shadow or even the glance of a man of low caste falling on the cooking pot could necessitate throwing away of the contents.

SEPARATE IDENTITY

The separate identity of the Sikh *Panth* is such a patent fact of history through which Gurus gave a message of new organizational form. In addition Gurus also maintained within it a universal spirit. It was done for practical values as mere ideological distinctiveness was not enough. The Gurus were deeply committed to achieving practical social goal. It was the inner compulsion both of their spiritualism and universalism that prompted them to create a new path and a *Panth* so as to give practical shape to a programme that will deliver the masses from the religious and social torment of the caste system, as well as, from the most brutal cruelty and oppression of the rulers and Governments of the time that exploited religion for the purpose.

LOVE OF HUMANITY

Nanak loved all human beings, irrespective of religious or geographical limits. He stressed the principles of love and service to mankind. "In the world, service of the people is supreme. That will secure a seat for you in God's heart". He proclaimed that the help of the poor is necessary for the subjugation of the ego. God has created every body and therefore no body has the right to look down upon any body.

RAISED STATUS OF WOMAN

In India, status of woman was held in inferior position during the life time of Guru Nanak. In Hindu and Muslim religions women were not allowed to enter in *Mandir* or *Masjad*. *Purdah* (complete cover of the body), child marriage and *Sati* (the custom of self immolation of widows on funeral pyers of their husbands) were common and no education was imparted to women. Guru Nanak Dev Ji raised the status of women and said, "How can they be inferior when they give birth to Kings?. Furthermore, in a woman we are conceived, of a woman we are born, to a woman we are betrothed and married. Through a woman new relationships are formed. The woman perpetuates the race. When one woman dies, we look for another. Why should we call her evil, of whom are born men great and powerful ? A woman is born of a woman. There is no human being who is not born of woman. Nanak true God is independent of a woman". Thus, Guru Nanak provided an equal status to women and it is regarded as a significant part of the Sikh community.

EDUCATION

Gurus also emphasized on education particularly spiritual instruction to retain peace of mind. Nanak says, "one may read cartloads or boatbills, one may read for days, for months or for whole life. This is all in exercise to bloat the ego". Nanak lays down the qualifications of a teacher. A teacher may be termed educated only when he dispenses knowledge spontaneously. He digests what he reads and arrives at the reality and pays his attention to the Name of God. The egoist sells knowledge, earns position and eats position. If an educated man is greedy and vain he is to be termed as fool. Furthermore, learning without realizing the purpose of life and singing the praise of God increases egoism. God and man live together but egoism creates a wall of separation between them.

GRISTHA ASHRAM (FAMILY LIFE)

Guru Nanak declared that family life is an essential part of the life of a Sikh. He rejected ascetic and epicurean path. The life of a house holder is an ideal path as it offers opportunities for social, material and spiritual growth of an integrated man. Guru narrated that even the ascetics had to knock at the door of a house holder for food, clothing etc.

CONCEPT OF MEERI-PEERI

Meeri means temporal power and *Peeri* means spiritual power. *Meeri* is to smite the oppressor and *Peeri* to protect the innocent. Gurus sow the seeds of *Meeri-Peeri* in Sikhs. God-oriented Sikh enjoys the bliss of '*Raj-jog*'.

Revolutions originate in the realms of ideas and happenings. The Sikh revolution originated in the concepts of '*Meeri-Peeri*'. The creation of the *Khalsa* and the continuation of the armed struggle during its revolutionary phase was an extension of '*Meeri and Peeri*'. After the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji saw that it would no longer be possible to protect the community without the aid of arms. So Guru Hargobind established a seat of temporal power parallel to the Mughal State, as God's throne (*Akal Takhat*) and Guru Gobind Singh Ji called the *Khalsa* as God's *Khalsa* (*Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa*) with same principle.

Actually *Meeri* revolved around *Peeri*, and it is not the other way round. This is but natural as in fact the entire Sikh revolutionary movement is evolved out of Guru Nanak's revelation. There are innumerable verses in *Guru Granth Sahib* saying that God is merciful to all mankind. Thus, 'cherishing the poor', saving the saints and destroying the oppressor are according to Guru's teachings. Guru Gobind Singh Ji created *Khalsa* to complete this mission.

CREATION OF THE *KHALSA*

The founding of *Khalsa* at fort Keshgarh, Anandpur Sahib in 1699 was initiated by the solemn ceremony of *Amrit Chhakna* (drinking nectar – the drink of gods). The significance of baptism (*Amrit Chhakna*) was to put one's interests, *tan, man, dhan* (body, soul, wealth) at stake for the sake of belief. By this Guru placed human beings to a higher plane of motivation and conduct. The importance of *Amrit* is so high that after *partaking* it to beloved fives (Daya Ram, Dharam Das, Sahib Chand, Himmat Chand and Mohkam Chand – who offered their heads to the Guru to lay down life) Guru Ji himself parted *Amrit* from the beloved and was initiated into '*Khalsa*' brotherhood formally. Guru Ji declared that henceforth the name of a male Sikh will end in 'Singh' and that of a female in 'Kaur'. Singh means 'a lion' and Kaur means 'a princess'. The Guru himself did so, replacing 'Gobind Rai' by 'Gobind Singh'. The creation of *Khalsa* was meant to carry out God's mission. *Khalsa* is the army of God. It is the order of the Guru that whenever Singhs will meet they should utter '*Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh*' means the *Khalsa* belongs to God and so does victory belong to Him. The slogan is a motto of Sikhs.

DYNAMICS OF FAITH

Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned or faith as ultimate concern. In real sense it is an act of the total personality. The Sikh movement was conceived in a spiritual faith means you should love the God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Reason is the precondition of faith. Man's reason is finite it moves within finite relations when dealing with the universe and with man himself. Man is finite, man's reason lives in preliminary concerns, but man is also aware of his potential infinity and his awareness appears as his ultimate concern, as faith. The real road leads from reason fulfilled in faith, through reason without faith, to reason filled with demonic – destructive faith. Reason is the

presupposition of faith and faith is the fulfillment of reason. Indeed there is no gap in the spiritual life, as there is none in nature. Thus, there is no conflict between the nature of faith and the nature of reason.

SIGNIFICANCE OF NAAM

Naam is a technical term in religious literature. Guru Nanak Dev Ji had the mandate of propagation *Naam* (to become God's instrument) and creation of the Sikh *Panth*. Nanak says, 'True are Thy worlds and Thy universes, True are the forms Thou createth. True is He; True is His creation'.

In Sikhism the objective of *Naam* is not to secure *Mukti* (salvation) but to attune oneself to the Will of God while in the other religions *Mukti*, *Shanti* (peace) or spiritual bliss is the sole aim. Guru Nanak Dev gave the *mantra* of *Satnaam*, as *Naam* sustains the entire creation. Guru says, "He who is fond of God, has what he to do with *Mukti* or heaven. Crores of heavens can not equal to God's *name*. The God-conscious man has no desire for *Mukti*. I seek nor power neither *Mukti*, grant me the love of God. In no way *Mukti* can be equal to love of God. By service in the world alone one finds a place in God's court". The Sikh Gurus made the service of humanity a pre-requisite to spiritual development. He who performs selfless service meets God. In fact, service of humanity is an essential component of Sikh way of life, even after the highest spiritual attainment. In Sikhism, *Seva-Simran* (social service and *Naam Japna*) becomes a joint watch-word, as complimentary components and not as mutually exclusive of each other.

Naam is within us, how to obtain it. Guru says, '*Naam* is attained through *Gur - parsad* (Guru's or God's grace). The perfect Guru awakens, our heart to the vision of God. By God's grace alone *Naam* can be remembered. Service in the world leads to approval in the court of God. He who serves God get bliss and is absorbed in *Naam*.

SIKH PANTH

The Sikh *Panth* developed on lines different from other religions. Sikh Gurus profess to follow the devotional path (*Naam marg*), disown Hindu scriptures and *Avatars*, ridicule acts of *Brahmins* and *Brahmanism* and condemn idol-worship and caste. This point of divergence is very important, which led to far-reaching social and historical consequences; because institutions can be replaced by institutions and systems by systems, but not by more ideologies as much, unless these are shaped into institutions or systems.

Guru Nanak went on his missionary tours, he established local congregations of Sikhs (*Sangats*), *Dharamsals* (centres of congregational worship and social activity of the Sikhs). Guru Nanak himself, had a direct bearing on the creation and consolidation of the Sikh *Panth* as an anti-caste institution. People from all castes, high and low, from all walks of life, rich and poor from Hindus as well as Muslims attended his congregations and became Nanak *Panthees*. He emphasized on truth, education, home life, simple living and to become faithful disciple. He asserted that egoism has no place in Sikh *Panth*.

TRADITION OF SACRIFICE

Life is a very dear phenomenon. The will to live and the instinct of self-preservation work incessantly from the tiny micro-organisms to the highly developed forms of life, including man. So people love to cling to life, as long as they can, even it be unhappy. A Greek philosopher maintained that life was no better than death, and yet he himself refused to die. When asked to explain the contradiction, he replied that he wanted to live because death too was no better than life. Sikh history is replete with glorious deeds of suffering and self-effacements, unparalleled in the annals of mankind.

The foundation stone that Guru Nanak laid was of self-sacrifice. Guru Nanak said, "who so ever wish to enter the path of Sikhism must come with his head on his palm not to seek any obligation but out of sheer divine love". Sacrifice or martyrdom for every Sikh is an asset of faith to fight righteousness and universally accepted principles of truth. The fight for righteousness must be fought with unrelenting determination and there should never be any compromise on the basic principles involved in it. Moreover, the blood of the martyr is the seed of church. The souvenir of a true hero according to *Gurbani* (words uttered by Gurus) is as follows:

"On no account must a hero abandon battle - field ever; neither show a sign of weakness nor must he yield ever. To court death for a right cause is the right of every true hero". To uphold the sanctity of human dignity the spirit of sacrifice is very important. Guru Nanak had envisaged the kind of struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil in all walks of life. Guru says, "God has himself created the battle - field, where the good are to fight against the evil. The fighters face each other and, in the din of battle, the Guru-wards are happy to visualize that are going to fight for God, for truth. The perverse, the unripe fools, are struck down and lose, because the Lord himself fighteth for the right as also causeth the right to be carried on, till victory was won".

In this conviction Guru Nanak had himself entered the battle-field of life, guiding and serving the whole humanity. Every event of his life indicates how he had to face robbers, murderers, man-eaters, cheaters, hyopocrites, fanatics and in fact, all sorts of misguided men. The martyrdom tradition starts with the fifth Guru, Guru Arjan. His martyrdom was the sovereign among martyrs and afterwards the ninth Guru, Guru Teg Bahadur broke his potsherd (body) on the head of Delhi king Aurangzeb, and made his way to Heaven. The Guru, by this way, had displayed a great event of heroism for the sake of religion and gave his head without faltering.

Later on all the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh, (Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh) Mata Gujri (mother of Guru Gobind Singh) and thousands beloved Sikhs sacrificed against the wind of tyranny for the noble cause of the truth, true faith and justice. Some were roasted in the boiling water, some were broken on the wheels, some were hanged unto death; of some the heads were cut with sword and some had to cut limbs joint by joint.

Thus, during Mugal rule young or old, if he wore the hair he was sure to meet the death. True Sikh says, "May I have a true Sikh till my last breath ! May the hair be on my head till my last breath !"

Guru Nanak justified the supreme sacrifice :

"Dying is the privilege of only those brave men who die, after having first become acceptable to God."

Bhai Gurdas had defined such kind of dying as under :

"A martyr is one who hath faith in spiritual living and hath attained a balanced mind. He remaineth above fear and above doubt." Bhagat Kabir specifically wrote about a brave man, "Truely brave is he, who fighteth for religious cause".

NISHAN SAHIB

Every country, institution, community or religion has its own flag. In Sikh *Panth* the flag is called *Nishan Sahib*. Before the construction of the *Gurdwara*, *Nishan Sahib* is installed which may vary in height. It is usually made of steel pipe and at the top Sikh insignia (*khanda*) is attached. The pole is covered with yellow-orange (*kesary*) cloth which signifies spirit of the sacrifice. *Khanda* is a double edged sword and is a metaphore of Divine knowledge. Its sharp edges cleaving truth from falsehood. Below the *khanda* a triangular cloth is attached on which *khanda* with swords and iron ring is printed. The fluttering of cloth in air indicates the independ-

ence of Sikh religion. The steel pole is fixed on a concrete platform having 4-5 ft. height above ground level. *Nishan Sahib* shows path of truth, protection for poor and availability of free food and place for stay. In Sikhism, Guru Hargobind Sahib installed two *Nishan Sahib* at Harmandir Sahib, one representing *Bhagti* and the other one of *Shakti*. Interestingly, the *Nishan Sahib* of *Bhagti* was kept lower or shorter than that of *Shakti*.

THE GURDWARA (GURU'S HOME)

The Sikh temple is called *Gurdwara*. In the world wherever the Sikhs live they strive to establish a *Gurdwara* even before making their own house. In every *Gurdwara* the Holy Scripture (*Guru Granth Sahib Ji*) is installed in the main hall, used for daily prayer. A *Gurdwara* is a living and concrete manifestation of Sikh ethics and principal ideas, such as universal equality and brotherhood of man, service to all and scarifying self for the betterment and upliftment of the poor and downtrodden. These ideas are practiced in *Gurdwara* daily.

Every body irrespective of one's nationality, caste, creed, colour or gender is welcome to a *Gurdwara*. The only requirement is humility and maintain proper decorum i.e., put off shoes, wash your hands and feet, cover your head and do not carry anything objectionable like tobacco, drugs, alcohol etc. In the *Darbar* hall every body whether high or low, rich or poor, man or woman sits on the floor that is generally carpeted. No specific seat is provided to anybody.

In the main hall every one approaches the *Guru Granth Sahib* and bows before it in reverence and takes his place wherever available. In the hall *Sangat* sit on a carpeted floor in the benign presence of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, which is installed at a higher level. The hymns are sung from the *Granth Sahib* by *Ragis* (hymn singers) with the musical Instruments. The singings of hymns is called *Kirtan* (praise of the Lord). At the end they stand before *Guru Granth Sahib* with their palms pressed together in a humble posture and address God in a prayer. Every prayer ends with following request :

"Through Nanak may the glory of your *Naam* increase and may the whole world be blessed by your Grace"

After the prayer a *Shabad* (hymn) is read from *Guru Granth Sahib Ji* and then *Karah Parshad* (sweet semolina), a pudding made from flour, sugar and butter, is distributed equally to the congregation.

Some *Gurdwaras* are local and some have historic importance. The five most important *Gurdwaras* are known as *Takhats*/thrones or seats of authority. These are *Akal Takhat* at Amritsar (in front of the Golden Temple), *Takhat Patna Sahib* (Bihar), *Takhat Keshgarh Sahib* at Anandpur Sahib, *Takhat Hazur Sahib* at Nanded (Maharashtra) and *Takhat Damdama Sahib* at Talwandi Sabo. The *Hukam Nama's* are issued from the *Akal Takhat* by the head (*Jathedar*) of *Akal Takhat* from time to time. These injunctions have the binding force of 'Sikh personal law'. The *Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee* (SGPC), an elected body, manages the majority of historic *Gurdwaras*.

HARMANDIR SAHIB (TEMPLE OF GOD)

Traditionally the place of Amritsar was covered with dense forest. In this forest there was a small Tank of Nectar where *Harmandir Sahib* is situated. According to historical views Lord Budha stopped for a while and said to the Buddhist monks, "The spot is important to attain salvation". Guru Nanak also visited this site in 1532. Guru Ram Das enlarged this tank and named it *Amrit Sarovar* (the pool of nectar). He also laid down the foundation stone of a village Chak Ramdas, also known as '*Ramdaspur*'. The land was bought by Guru Ram Das paying 500 *Akbri rupees*. The digging work of *Amrit Sarover* was started in 1574. The excavation of tank was completed in 1589 by Guru Arjan.

Guru Arjan prepared the map plan of *Harmandir* and its foundation was laid in 1589 by the Muslim Saint Mian Mir. The building was completed in 1601 and *Adi Granth Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* was installed in August 1604. Baba Budha was appointed the Chief *Granthi* (reader of the Holy scripture).

Shri Harmandir Sahib, a two storied building is built in the centre of the sacred tank. The construction of *Harmandir* was done on a lower plinth than the surrounding area. The idea was that God could be attained by bending low in submission and humility. The upper half of the walls, sides as well as central dome are covered with golden leafed copper sheets. Sher-e-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh completed the golden decoration work around 1830. The architecture of *Harmandir* represents a happy blending of the Hindu and Muslim artistic traditions and is a combination of the two. Recently Sikh *Sangat* of U.K. collected offerings to change the old gold plates and installed fresh one. *Harmandir* has four doors indicating it is open to all irrespective of religion, cast, creed or sex. To enter in the *Harmandir* there is a *Darshani Deodi* path. Around the tank there is a wide promenade (*parkarma* or path of circumambulation). Every day *Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* carried in a Golden *palanquin* from the *Akal Takhat* (the seat of temporal authority situated in front of *Harmandir*) at 5 A.M. in winter and 4 A.M. in summer and carried back to the *Akal Takhat* in the same *palanquin* at 9 P.M. in winter and 10 P.M. in summer. All kind of visitors are welcomed. Holy hymns from *Shri Granth Sahib*, *Bani* of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas and *Gazals* of Bhai Nand Lal Goya are sung by *Ragis* throughout the day in *Harmandir*. There is no formal or ritualistic worship. The offerings can be made in the form of money, flowers or *Deg*.

The important places around *Harmandir Sahib* are *Akal Takhat*, Baba Atal (a nine storeyed tower built in the memory of Atal Rai son of Guru Hargobind Sahib), *Guru Ka Langar* (a community Kitchen), free hostels for devotees are (Srai Guru Ram Das, Guru Nanak Niwas, Guru Hargobind Niwas, Guru Arjan Dev Niwas, Mata Ganga Ji Niwas, Akal Rest House) and SGPC offices. There is a *Toshekhana* on *Darhsani Deodi* in which very precious articles offered by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Sikhs are kept and these are

demonstrated on particular days. The most important ones are golden doors panels, golden canopy and jeweled head-band. There is a central Sikh museum in which paintings of Sikh Gurus, Saints, warriors and prominent Sikh leaders are depicted. In the museum old holy scriptures and valuable articles are also kept.

The other objects of interest around *Harmandir Sahib* are *Dukh Bhanjini Ber* (Jujube tree), *Ilachi Ber*, *Thara Sahib*, *Ber Baba Budha Ji*, *Bunga Baba Deep Singh Ji* etc.

Uptil now *Shri Harmandir Sahib* was destroyed and descreted again and again by Mugal and other rulers. But Sikhs rebuilt it and avenged the sacrilege. Thus, *Harmandir* is a spiritual and cultural centre for all human beings. It is the leading place of pilgrimage of the Guru's disciples. Every Sikh has ardent desire to pay visit, take holy dip in *Sarover* and offer obeisance to *Harmandir Sahib*.

THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB

The *Guru Granth Sahib* – the Holy scripture is known as *Adi Granth* or *Guru Granth*. The *Granth* is a source of divine wisdom, felicity and bliss. The *Granth* begins with two words *Ik Onkar* (ੴ) – means there is one (formless) God. The *Bani* of *Guru Granth Sahib* commences from 'Jap' (also called *Jap Ji Sahib*) with Divine proclamation (*Mool Mantar*). The *Mool Mantar* is a basic belief or fundamental doctrine of the Sikh faith. The *Mool Mantar*'s English version is as follows:

There is one God

Eternal truth is His name

Creator of all things and the all prevailing spirit

Without fear and Without enmity

Timeless and Formless

Beyond birth and death

Self enlightened

By Guru's favour He is obtained

At the end of 'Jap' is an Epilogue (*Slokas*)

"Air is like the Guru, water like the father and earth like great mother. Day and night are our nurses be that watch us play in their laps and the world is our playground. Our acts, right or wrong, at Thy court shall come to judgment. Some shall be seated near Thy seat and some shall be kept distant. The toils will have ended for ever those that have worship. O' Nanak, their faces will be lit with sublime radiance who chanted the *Naam* with deep reverence, dedication and devotion. They will become free from birth and death cycle.

Guru Granth Sahib Ji consists of 1430 pages and the entire volume is in poetic form and includes the sacred hymns of 36 holy men from different castes and backgrounds. Six were Sikh Gurus (Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur); fifteen *Bhagats* (Kabir, Namdev, Farid, Ravidas, Dhanna, Bhikha, Beni, Tarlochan, Jaidev, Surdas, Sadna, Sain, Ramanand, Parmanand and Peepa), eleven *Bhatts* (Kal Sahar, Gauand, Bhikha, Keerat, Mathura, Jalap, Salh, Bhalh, Balh, Harbans and Nalh) and four Gursikhs (Mardana, Satta and Balwand and Sundar). Guru Arjan Dev Ji compiled the *Granth* and the writing work was done by Bhai Gurdas. Finally, Guru Gobind Singh Ji added Hymns of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji to it and completed this Holy *Granth* at Talwandi Sabo in 1707. The *bani* (Hymns) having 5871 *Shabads* is in 31 major *Ragas* (total 60 *ragas*) or musical measures.

The *Granth* was arranged on a four-fold basis – (i) *Ragas*, (ii) metre of the hymns, (iii) authorship and (iv) Key, clef or *Ghar*. Under each *Raga* the hymns of Guru Nanak are given in *Mohalla* one, Guru Angad in *Mohalla* two, Guru Amardas in *Mohalla* three, Guru Ram Das in *Mohalla* four, Guru Arjan Dev in *Mohalla* five and Guru Tegh Bahadur in *Mohalla* nine. *Mohalla* means quarter. Thus, the Gurus composition appear in the *Granth* adopted the name of Nanak as their nom de plume. The central idea of each hymn is in

the line of *Rahao*. The *Adi Granth* does not contain a word about the bibliography of the Gurus. It consists only of prayers and devotional songs with high advice for a better life. In his last Hymn Guru Arjan summed up the value of *Granth* as follows :

"In this dish are placed three things. Truth, Harmony and Wisdom. These are seasoned with the name of God which is the basis of all. Who so ever eats and enjoys it shall be saved".

Guru Granth Sahib affirms the ideal of 'Shabad Guru'. Guru Nanak says, "The word is my Guru and without the word the man goes about like mad". The word denotes an impulse, a vibration and stimulates knowledge. Guru Amar Das said, "The *Gurbani* is God himself and through it the man obtains union with God". In other words Guru Ram Das says, "The *Gurbani* is the Lord's name and this name I enshrine in my mind". The compiler of the *Adi Granth*, Guru Arjan said, "The holy book is the abode of God".

The *Holy Granth* was ceremoniously installed by Guru Arjan in *Shri Harmandir Sahib* on 15th August, 1604 with Baba Budha as the first priest.

Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji stayed at Damdama Sahib (Talwandi Sabo) for nine months in 1706-07 and dictated the whole *Adi Granth* to Bhai Mani Singh and added the hymns of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji. On 3 October, 1708, at Nanded (Hazoor Sahib) Guru Gobind Singh Ji opened the *Granth*, placed five paisa and a coconut before it, bowed before *Granth Sahib* and declared it as the Guru for all times to come. Guru brought to an end of a person being the Guru.

Thus, the Eternal *Guru - Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* is an unparalleled unique gift of Guru Arjan Dev Ji for overall spiritual guidance and upliftment of the mankind. The *Shabad Guru* provides the light to the entire humanity for spiritual brotherhood.

Guru Arjan Dev Ji paid so much respect to *Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* that at night he himself slept on the floor while the Divine World Scripture was kept high on the *Charpai* bed (*Plang*) honourably and respectfully.

KIRTAN (RECITING SHABAD)

The Divine message is communicated through *Shabad*. The *Shabad Kirtan* has been made an inseparable part of the Sikh way of life. *Kirtan Chauki* tradition has been in vogue in the *Gurdwaras* for centuries. The *Bani* of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* written and indexed according to the prescribed *Ragas*, singing forms, music signs, headings and the other guidelines issued in the *Bani*, creates original and specific musicology. Scientific approach to music can help in recognizing more explicitly the music tradition according to *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. Recitation of *Gurbani* under prescribed *Ragas*, peculiar singing styles and definite musical signs is a must for any *kirtania*. These musical elements and devices have been used as a key for the compilation of the Holy scripture. For *Kirtan*, in general, harmonium and *Tabla* is used. However, the traditional instruments included *Rabab*, *Siranda*, *Taous*, *Israj*, *Dilruba*, *Tanpura*, *Swarmandal* and *Tamboora*.

ARDAS (PRAYER)

Ardas means making a request before the Almighty God or Guru. It has a special place in Sikhism. A Sikh performs *Ardas* on all occasions. The *Ardas* is always for the welfare of the whole mankind. In *Ardas*, after invoking the Almighty, ten Gurus and the eternal embodiment *Shabad Guru*, '*Guru Granth Sahib Ji*' are remembered with all reverence faith and devotion. Then five beloveds, four *Sahibzadas*, forty blessed souls, multitude of Sikhs who devotedly and sincerely meditated on the Devine *Naam*, those Sikhs (male and female) who selflessly sacrificed their lives for noble cause and became martyrs are remembered. Guru Ji also ordains

Lord, this is my prayer that provider of joy, may never go out of my mind. Nanak's supplication is that all that pleases Thee (Lord) may always appeal to me as good.

If a man or woman is confronted with any problem and is unable to solve the same, then pray sincerely to God, dedicating your soul, mind and body to him. In this way God or Guru always helps.

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